

IN THE CLAIMS:

1-26. (Cancelled)

27. (Currently Amended) A method for operating a direct injection diesel internal combustion engine, which is operated in a first operating region corresponding to low to medium load in such a way that combustion of the fuel takes place at a local temperature below the temperature of NO_x formation and with a local air ratio above a ratio at which particulates are formed, and in which fuel injection is initiated at a crank angle of between 50° to 5° before top dead center of a compression phase and exhaust gas is recirculated at an exhaust gas recirculation rate of 50% to 70%, wherein in a second operating region corresponding to medium partial load, fuel injection is started in a range from approximately 2° crank angle before top dead center to approximately 20° crank angle after top dead center, wherein exhaust gas is recirculated in the second operating region at an exhaust gas recirculation rate between 20% and 40%, wherein fuel injection in the first operating region uses an injection pressure between 400 to 1,000 bar and, wherein fuel injection in the second operating region uses an injection pressure of at least 1,000 bar, wherein in a third operating region corresponding to high partial load or full load, start of the main part of fuel injection occurs in a range from -10° to 10° crank angle after top dead center, and wherein the effective mean pressure in the third operating region is at least 5.5 bar.

28. **(Previously Presented)** The method according claim 27, wherein fuel injection is started in a range of approximately 2° crank angle before top dead center to approximately 10° crank angle after top dead center.

29.-31. **(Canceled).**

32. **(Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 27, wherein in the first operating region a main part of combustion lies in a range of -10° to 10° crank angle before top dead center.

33. **(Cancel).**

34. **(Currently Amended)** The method according to claim ~~33~~ 27, wherein in the third operating region multiple injection is used.

35. **(Currently Amended)** The method according to claim ~~33~~ 27, wherein in the third operating region the exhaust gas recirculation rate is 30% at most.

36. **(Currently Amended)** The method according to claim ~~33~~ 27, wherein in the third operating region the exhaust gas recirculation rate is 10% to 20%.

37. **(Cancel).**

38. **(Currently Amended)** The method according to claim ~~33~~ 27, wherein the effective mean pressure in the third operating region is at least 6 bar.

39. **(Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 27, wherein a overall air ratio lies between 1.0 and 2.0.

40. **(Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 27, wherein exhaust gas recirculation is performed externally or internally.

41. **(Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 27, wherein a swirl value is varied in at least one operating region depending on load and engine speed.

42. **(Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 27, wherein a swirl value is varied in all operating regions depending on the load and engine speed.

43. **(Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 27, wherein an effective compression ratio is varied by shifting a closing time of at least one intake valve.

44. **(Previously Presented)** The method according to claims 27 or 33, wherein at least in the first and/or third operating region internal exhaust gas recirculation is performed by opening the intake valve during the exhaust phase.

45. **(Previously Presented)** The method according to claims 27 or 33, wherein at least in the first and/or third operating region internal exhaust gas recirculation is performed by opening the exhaust valve during the intake phase.

46. **(Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 27, wherein changeover from the first to the second operating region, respectively from the second to the first operating region, is initiated by reducing, respectively increasing, the exhaust gas recirculation rate.

47. **(Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 27, wherein changeover from the first to the second operating region or vice versa is initiated by reducing the internal or external exhaust gas recirculation rate and by delaying the start of injection, respectively by increasing the exhaust gas recirculation rate and moving the start of injection forward.

48. **(Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 27, wherein a decrease of the required exhaust gas recirculation rate on changing from the first to the second operational region is achieved by backshifting the opening and/or closing time of the intake valve.

49. **(Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 27, wherein the effective mean pressure in the first operating region is between 0 to 6 bar.

50. **(Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 27, wherein the effective mean pressure in the first operating region is between 0 to 5.5 bar.

51. **(Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 27, wherein the effective mean pressure in the second operating region is between 3.5 to 8 bar.

52. **(Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 27, wherein the effective mean pressure in the second operating region is between 4 to 7 bar.

53.-54. **(Cancel)**.

55.-56. **(Canceled)**

57.-61. **(Cancel).**